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## DO LATIN AND GREEK NEED SOMETHING DONE FOR THEM IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS?

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A recent parallel drawn between the results of western education in India and in Japan closes by remarking upon "the failure of education when divorced from some living and dominant sentiment."<sup>1</sup> It is only when education subserves some end greater than the mere fitting of the pupil for a money-making pursuit, that it has real vitality and the elements of permanence. There is so radical a difference between even the narrowest of high schools, for instance, and the "business college" that it would be useless to compare them in any particular. The most hide-bound of high schools cannot forget its origin in the old academy; it must feel a responsibility to hand on the precious tradition of high culture which is the glory of our race. Whenever a high school springs into being, no matter what the plans of its promoters may be, the school becomes a temple of serious, sound, and non-commercial learning. The original plan may have been to make the school "modern" and "practical" (meaning a public "business college"). The name, and the tradition which that name involves, invariably defeat the aims of those who would steal the title of the high school because they dare not trust their "practical" plan to stand or fall on its own merits. Nothing is more encouraging to the friend of real culture than the distinct gains made by the culture side of high-school curricula everywhere.

It may seem extravagant to claim that the liberality of aim of the school depends upon its teaching Latin and Greek, yet in a guarded way this claim is put forth here. Anyone who has visited schools extensively must be conscious of a different atmosphere in the school which entirely excludes the ancient classics from that which pervades the school where Latin, and perhaps Greek, is taught. That part of the teaching force who have had the classic training seems, apart from the

<sup>1</sup> *Nation*, Vol. LXXX, No. 2072.

number of their pupils, to exert a certain humanizing influence upon the whole school. Second-hand acquaintance with the classics no more produces this peculiar effect—one of taste rather than of scholarship—than the reading of the Old Testament in translation gives the true Hebrew texture to the mind; the moral effect is thus attainable, but the æsthetic quality largely eludes the student. He may become a moralist but not a Hebraist. With a mere smattering of Hebrew and Arabic a man may become a very decent Hebraist, though he may fail to obtain a grasp upon the moral teachings of the East. First-hand acquaintance with the classics, though it be but imperfect and limited, gives a grasp upon the æsthetics of the Greek world, since transformed into the essence of our occidental civilization, as nothing else but better work along the same line can do better.

Here seems to be something not only so well worth keeping, but so necessary to keep, that we ought to know just what is going on regarding the study of the classics in our schools.

First, how is it with Latin? Without placing too implicit a trust in statistics, we may believe that about half of the high-school pupils of this country are studying Latin. The fact that medicine, the law, and even the technical courses<sup>1</sup> have some dependence upon Latin in the way of terminology, and that there is a wide recognition of the disciplinary value of the study of this dead language, have operated to keep Latin fairly popular. Before the day of wide election, when the secondary curriculum had simply bifurcated into the "modern side" and the "classic side," there was rather a desperate contest, in which either science or Latin was to go to the wall. More generous views regarding freedom of election suddenly put an end to this unseemly factional fight, and it was seen that both Latin and science may be harbored in the same brain without laying mines or discharging torpedoes at one another.

While the situation as regards Latin is not alarming, it is not altogether satisfactory. All high-school principals know that in many a high school the Latin department trembles for its standing in numbers at the beginning of every term. Not so with the German

<sup>1</sup> "The study of Latin is strongly recommended to persons who purpose to enter the Institute, since in addition to its disciplinary value it gives a better understanding of the various terms used in Science, and greatly facilitates the acquisition of the modern languages."—M. I. T. catalogue, p. 110.

department, or any modern language department! In the case of Latin there must be some extraordinary reason for the choice, such as the preparation for the college entrance examination. The particular modern language is selected because of some racial or social preference, but a modern language is chosen somewhere as a matter of course. Another condition that helped Latin is rapidly disappearing; it had been observed by parents that teachers of Latin were on the whole better equipped for teaching than the teachers of the modern languages.

There is grave reason to doubt whether Latin will continue to hold its own in the high schools unless taking it shall be definitely the rule and not taking it decidedly the exception. There are many who still argue that the study of Latin which does not often result in the power to readily read the simplest text is a waste of time. Granting the desirability of more comprehensiveness in the teaching of Latin, the argument of waste of time must be boldly met with counter-argument. Surely the stoniest and boniest teaching of Latin (alas! we have all heard it) unlocks linguistic and humanistic treasures to which no modern language, however well taught, furnishes the key.

It seems safe to assert that complete election of studies from the start is the present, or coming, policy of the high schools of this country. The pupil upon entering the high school is, or soon will be, allowed full choice of studies<sup>1</sup> among all that can properly be begun at that time. His choice will also be unrestricted thereafter, except as necessary sequence naturally restricts choice. What then will determine the choice of work upon entrance into the school? The child's natural bent as interpreted to him by parent and teacher.

When the eighth grade and ultimately the seventh grade are included in the high-school regimen, there will be a systematic effort to present the choice of studies, and intelligently to advocate the inclusion of a strong culture element in the pupil's choice. Naturally teachers who know the value of Latin from the disciplinary, as well as from the informational, standpoint will urge that, unless foreign to the pupil's settled plan, Latin be studied in at least a course extending through *Cæsar*, Book IV.

<sup>1</sup> W. T. Foster, "The Elective System," *School Review*, March, 1905; also George N. Carman, "The Secondary School in the Middle West," *Educational Review*, Vol. XXIX, No. 3.

It may be asked how such pressure of influence differs from prescription. It differs exactly as any individualistic differs from a communistic scheme. The principle of free choice is preserved, but every effort is made to make the choice such as will in the end produce a rounded culture supplemented by an efficient training. There is just the difference, old as the world, between persuasion and force—between a crass assumption of omniscience and a tentative, but well-considered, judgment.

Parents will more and more influence their children's election of studies, but it is doubtful if their influence will ever be as great as that of the teacher in this matter. The wisest parents consult the teacher, and form their estimate of the children's mental scope largely upon the teacher's opinion. But even foolish parents, who overestimate and misunderstand their children's capacity, desire something more than mere money-getting ability to issue from their children's schooling. If the peculiar and, in the face of present barbaric influences, increasing importance of the classics to all who are to stand even in the outer temple, instead of in the holy of holies of our civilization, is urged by teachers and accepted by parents, we shall see Latin once more the recognized *pièce de résistance* of secondary education in this country. My belief is that this is its place, and that in the long run its occupying that place is inevitable. Much unnecessary and harmful experimenting will be saved if we, parents and teachers, say frankly to pupils:

Latin you shall study for your own good and the good of all cultivated society. We shall see to it that your training for some higher institution or for business is superadded; and that, if you must leave school at the end of the secondary period, you shall have had glimpses of enough separate fields of intellectual endeavor to make you intelligent, while your Latin will go far to make you—not too much of a Philistine.

When we have a high-school course of at least five years in length, and in each high school Latin zealously offered at the beginning of the eighth grade and at the beginning of the ninth grade for a five- and for a four- or two-year course respectively, all will be done for Latin that can be done from the standpoint of the arrangement of the course. When all arid pedantry has been relegated to the xyz courses of the University, and the living soul of modern illustration and

illumination put into the beautiful body of the school Latin classics, all will be done for Latin that can be done; also all that need be done.

The case of Greek is a peculiarly hard one. Furnishing the principles upon which Roman literary art was built and much of the material of that literature, the Greek language sank into the background for centuries. The western world of intellect thought in Latin, with only here and there a scholar versed in Greek. Then came the revival, which lasted to our day; but the sense that Latin had always been studied, while the study of Greek had to be reintroduced, was ever present in the mind of master and pupil. Greek always has had a certain remoteness, which naturally the difference in the alphabet has not lessened. In a time of educational disturbance Greek, being less easily defended, had to yield its place to the barbaric intruder.

No Hellenist can approach his favorite subject from any standpoint without pausing to eulogize. In the preface to Alfred and Maurice Croiset's *History of Greek Literature* the authors scout the notion of Greek's being in decline, and say:

There has really been no epoch when artists, poets, people of culture in general were so acutely sensible as now of the beauty of Greek in all its forms; and our object will be fully attained if we help in some measure to increase among the youth of our schools and among the public an intelligent appreciation of Greek thinking—the most peaceful and untrammelled that the world has ever known.

Chateaubriand, dealing with the titanic forces that have shaped the destinies of the world, compared Homer and the Bible. Says S. H. Butler in his *Harvard Lectures* on Greek subjects:

Hebraism and Hellenism stand out distinct, the one in all the intensity of its religious life, the other in the wealth and diversity of its secular gifts and graces.

“Thus the sharp contrasts of the sculptor's plan

Showed the two primal paths our race has trod;

Hellas the nurse of man complete as man,

Judæa pregnant with the living God.”

*The Spectator*,<sup>1</sup> in an able article upon “The Question of Compulsory Greek,” written before the proposition to abolish the compulsory requirement of Greek at Cambridge was voted down,<sup>2</sup> says:

<sup>1</sup> November 19, 1904, “The Question of Compulsory Greek.”

<sup>2</sup> By a vote of 1559 to 1062.

It is needless to say that if we believed that the study of Greek were likely to disappear from the curriculum either of the great public schools or the universities, as a consequence of the measures proposed by the Syndicate, we should unhesitatingly vote against the adoption of the Report. But surely the convinced believer in the value of Greek as an influence on national life would have sufficient confidence in his favorite language to think—as we think—that Greek can and will take care of itself; that its influence and strength are so obvious and insistent that it cannot be, and will not be, ignored.

But how is it with Greek at the present moment in the Middle West of the United States? I fear that we may say: ἀφανίζεται. In order to get a correct idea of the real condition of things regarding Greek, letters were sent to a leading professor of Greek in each of the states of Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan. The questions put were: (1) Is Greek holding its own in ———? (2) Does Greek need intelligent advocacy in the high schools? (3) Must elementary Greek be taught in the university? (4) Should Greek simply be given a fair chance among the electives of the high school? The answers, which, in a paper of any length should be quoted in full, seem definitely to establish that Greek distinctly is not holding its own in this section of the country. It also is agreed that those who know and feel the great profit of the study have been remiss in zealous advocacy, and that the time has come for aggressive work. All the professors from whom replies were received felt that, dangerous as it may be, under present conditions elementary Greek in the university is inevitable, if the department is to be kept alive. One of the replies states positively the belief that Greek left to fare for itself among the electives of the high school will not survive.

Then what is to be done for Greek? Advocate it in season and out of season. President Pritchett of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology writes that "Greek is practically out of consideration as an element of preparation for the technical school." This from an ardent believer in the "disciplinary value in Latin and Greek" must be taken as a friendly decision on this count against Greek, upon the facts in the case.<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that only two years of the fundamental sciences, perhaps Physics and Biology, are desirable in the high school, and that Greek, needing no laboratory, is cheap and cannot fail to be useful to the right type of mind.

<sup>1</sup> See, however, "Requirements for Entrance into Department of Engineering," University of Michigan, effective in 1906, *University Bulletin*, Vol. VI, No. 11, p. 16.

Let the Latin teachers make themselves advocates of Greek: let the universities send, when they can, men and women imbued with Greek as well as Latin to teach the Latin in the schools, and place a premium upon the work of these teachers, as it shows for something more than that of the Latinists only. Professor M. L. D'Ooge is quoted as having once said: "The Philistines are upon us." They are upon us; it is a season of adversity for Greek; but adversity, if it does not break the spirit, is often a wholesome thing. "Tell it not in Gath," but Homer was taught in some colleges twenty years ago by grammar fiends who disgusted their pupils with Greek, and destroyed their enjoyment of Homer forever. When Greek comes back in the high school, it will be thoroughly taught from the literary standpoint, as well as from the grammatical, with the emphasis upon the æsthetics and not upon the mechanics.

The glory that was Greece  
And the grandeur that was Rome

are ours while we hold fast to them in the splendid literary remains that we inherit. If the grip upon them is relaxing, let me quote again Professor D'Ooge's saying, "The Philistines are upon us," and add: "Up and at them!" Professor Manly has issued the call to arms, and the tocsin is ringing from Maine to California.